

EKSPERIMENTI, ISTRAŽIVANJA I POMICANJE GRANICA UMJETNOSTI FOTOGRAFIJE OD 60-IH GODINA NADALJE

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*Snimak ploče s kućnim brojem... portret
nasmijanog muškarca s čudnovatim pokrivalom na glavi...
fotografije običnih obiteljskih kuća djelomično zaklonjenih
ogradom ili raslinjem... instalacija od ljepljive trake...
fotografija iz koje su izrezani dijelovi... fotografije položene na
pod, možda i pregažene.*

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SANDRA KRIŽIĆ
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*A photo showing a house number plate...
a portrait of a smiling man wearing a weird hat... photographs
of ordinary family houses, partly concealed by a fence or by
shrubbery... an installation made of duct tape... a photograph
from which various pieces have been cut out... photographs laid
across the floor, perhaps even trodden upon.*

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EXPERIMENTS, RESEARCH, AND SHIFTING THE BORDERS OF PHOTOGRAPHY ART SINCE THE 1960s

Alternativni načini kojima autori diljem svijeta propituju medij fotografije bliski su konceptualnoj umjetničkoj praksi, čiji je svojevrsni „zaštitni znak“ bila upotreba riječi. Uz njih, upravo se fotografija pokazala kao izuzetno važna za razumijevanje prirode nečijeg umjetničkog rada. Kako bismo pokušali odrediti zbivanja toga razdoblja u nacionalnom kontekstu, potrebno je podsjetiti se da postoje velike razlike između europske i američke fotografije. Autori s naših područja bliži su poslijeratnoj europskoj praksi, koja na polju fotografije nakon 30-ih godina doživljava prekid, ponajprije zbog političkih promjena i ratnih razaranja. Za razliku od Europe, u Sjedinjenim Američkim Državama kontinuirano se njeguje umjetnička fotografija, zajedno s drugim fotografskim izričajima.¹ Poslijeratna afirmacija fotografije na svjetskoj razini dogodila se ponajprije zahvaljujući projektu Edwarda Steichena *The Family of Man*, koji ga je 1955. godine priredio za Muzej moderne umjetnosti u New Yorku. U Europu ta izložba stiže u vrijeme dominacije konzervativnog pristupa koji karakterizira većinu radova prikazanih na brojnim međunarodnim izložbama 50-ih godina. Radilo se uglavnom o sentimentalnim sadržajima čiji je vizualni kôd bio zasnovan na općeprihvatljiv način, „poduprt“ ugodajnošću i svima razumljivim motivima. Bio je potreban određen vremenski odmak da bi se prema toj izložbi zauzeo kritički stav, na temelju kojeg je danas promatramo kao spektakl masovne kulture kojim se pomoću klišea i uopćenih stavova nastojalo izbjeći uvijek problematičnu istinu.²

Da bismo bolje razumjeli autorske pozicije 60-ih godina, potrebno je prisjetiti se prijelomnih promjena koje nastupaju u poslijeratno doba. Događa se prekid s dotad dominantnim kontinuitetom tradicionalizma u korist uspostavljanja veza s međuratnim avangardnim iskustvima,³ a javljaju se i inovativni umjetnički pristupi. U nacionalnom kontekstu 50-e i 60-e godine vrijeme su poslijeratnog modernizma.⁴ Naša pozicija na raskrižju politički dogmatičnog Istočnog bloka i značajnih impulsa koji su stizali sa Zapada – osobito u obliku putujućih izložbi, kao i sudjelovanja naših umjetnika na likovnim manifestacijama u inozemstvu – bila je specifična i zasigurno je utjecala i na razvoj fotografije (kao što je ostavila evidentne tragove u razvitku i ostalih umjetničkih medija).

Već početkom 50-ih godina počinje se naglašavati individualno umjetničko fotografsko stvaralaštvo koje se odmiče od često isticana objektivnog odraza stvarnosti u predmetnom smislu. Na razmeđu apstrakcije i stvarnosti fotografi diljem svijeta zanimaju se za 'slikarsko značenje', pa i za kontekst obuhvaćen *subjektivnom fotografijom* čija preobrazba ide u smjeru poticanja pojedinačnih i osobnih događaja. Na izvjestan način fotografija, jednako kao i jezik, omogućuje alternativu deskriptivnoj i slikovitoj prirodi slikarstva,⁵ a od 60-ih godina nadalje postaje medij koji na drugačiji način „ulazi“ u široko zasnovano značenjsko polje suvremene umjetnosti. Za razliku

Alternative ways in which artists explore the medium of photography throughout the world stand close to the conceptual artistic practice, whose “trademark” has been the use of words. Along with these, it is precisely photography that once proved exceptionally important for understanding the nature of artworks. In order to make an attempt at defining the processes of that period in the national context, we must remind ourselves of the considerable differences between European and American photography.

Authors from our region were closer to the European post-war art, which after the 1930s experienced a rupture in the field of photography, primarily owing to the political changes and wartime destruction. Unlike Europe, the US was continuously cultivating art photography, along with other photographic expressions.¹ The post-war affirmation of photography took place primarily owing to Edward Steichen's project *The Family of Man*, which he created in 1955 for the Museum of Modern Art in New York. The exhibition reached Europe at the time when conservative approaches were prevailing in the majority of artworks presented at the numerous international exhibitions during the 1950s. These mostly dealt with sentimental subjects, with a visual code that had a universally acceptable basis, “corroborated” by a certain atmosphere and motifs that were understandable to everyone. A sort of time distance was needed

in order to take a critical stance towards that exhibition, owing to which we can view it today as a spectacle of mass culture that used clichés and commonplaces in order to avoid the forever problematic truth.²

In order to understand better the artistic positions of the 1960s, we should recall the crucial changes that occurred in the post-war period. It was the time of breaking up with the hitherto prevailing continuity of traditionalism and of positioning oneself with regard to the avant-garde experiences from the period between the two world wars;³ and there were also innovative artistic approaches. In the national context, the 1950s and 1960s were the period of post-war modernism.⁴ Our position at the intersection of the politically dogmatic Eastern bloc and the important impulses that were coming from the West – especially in the form of travelling exhibitions, as well as participation of Yugoslav artists at art events abroad – was rather specific and certainly influenced the development of photography (just as it left evident traces in the evolution of other artistic media). As early as the 1950s, one can observe an emphasis on individual, artistic photography, detached from the often extolled objective mirroring of the reality in terms of topics. At the borderline between abstraction and reality, photographers throughout the world took interest in the “painting quality” of photography, as well as the context expressed in *subjective*

od prethodne modernističke prakse, u kojoj fotografija prenosi ono što je za njezinu estetsku valorizaciju bilo esencijalno, pojavljuju se „konstrukcije“ i „uprizorenja“ događaja koja njezino značenje dovode do samog ruba modernistički definiranih granica medija. Ta svojevrsna „erozija“ prikazivačkog karaktera fotografije rezultat je dematerijalizacije umjetničkog objekta i prijenosa težišta sa same realizacije na misaoni proces koji joj prethodi. U prošireno polje medija postupno se uvode osobne strategije umjetničkog djelovanja zasnovane na ideji, kao i radovi koji propituju performativni kapacitet fotografije. Pri njihovu nastanku fotoaparat se pokazao kao pomagalo kojim je moguće jednostavno dokumentirati događaj, ili realizirati ideju. Okvir kadra prestao je markirati prostor ulaska u one slojeve koji su se smatrali „dubljinama“ i koji su stoga često povezivani sa samom stvarnošću ili umjetničkom ekspresijom, riječima Victora Burgina. Vizualni narativ mnogih radova kojima je posvećen ovaj broj *Života umjetnosti* ograničen je. U većini slučajeva još je riječ o vidljivom svijetu, no njegovo se značenje opire podvrgavanju ustaljenim objašnjenjima. Između onog što vidimo i onog što znamo dolazi do procijepa. Fotografija, naime, gotovo neminovno navodi gledatelja da je shvaća kao neku vrstu vizualnog dokaza, no svrha takvog razmišljanja od 60-ih godina nadalje često ostaje neispunjena. Štoviše, francuski sociolozi toga doba drže da o fotografiji nije moguće govoriti oslanjajući

se na estetske kategorije. Po njihovu mišljenju ona je medij primarno namijenjen prosječnom gledatelju i služi kao njegov prozor u svijet, kao *dokaz* postojanja materijalne stvarnosti i njegova bivanja u tom svijetu. Značajne promjene nastupit će tek 70-ih godina, osobito zahvaljujući konceptualnoj umjetnosti, koja je oslobodila fotografiju i omogućila da je se prihvati kao ravnopravnu drugim umjetničkim medijima. Konceptualni umjetnici „prisivaju“ fotografiju kao medij kojim ne samo da dokumentiraju svoje raznovrsne akcije i događanja, nego se više fokusiraju na stvaranje i komuniciranje ideja i/ili koncepata. Dvije izložbe održane 60-ih godina uvele su konceptualnu umjetnost, a time i nov način upotrebe fotografije, na umjetničku kartu Europe: *Op Losse Schroeven – situaties en cryptostructuren* i *When Attitudes Become Form*. Siromašna umjetnost, anti-forma, konceptualna umjetnost i *land art* postale su izazovi ne samo za publiku, nego i za kustose koji uvode nove i inovativne strategije djelovanja. Od tada nadalje samoprezentacija, procesualnost, osobni manifesti, umjetnost tijela, happeninzi; eksperimenti provodeni radi analitičkog propitivanja medija, odmak od prikazivačkog statusa umjetničkog djela i upotreba anonimnih fotografija preuzetih iz tiskanih medija ili tuđih arhiva – postaju dijelovi brojnih autorskih strategija. Njihov „konačni rezultat“ bit će, uz ostalo, fotografija čija zadaća više nije zadržavanje pozornosti

NASLOVNICE ČASOPISA ZA FOTOGRAFIJU SPOT – OD 1972. DO 1978.
OBJAVLJENO 11 BROJEVA, GLAVNI UREDNIK: RADOSLAV PUTAR, IZDAVAČ:
GALERIJE GRADA ZAGREBA (DANAS MUZEJ SUVREMENE UMJETNOSTI)

COVERS OF MAGAZINE FOR PHOTOGRAPHY SPOT – 11 ISSUES PUBLISHED
FROM 1972 TO 1978, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: RADOSLAV PUTAR, PUBLISHER:
ZAGREBMUNICIPAL GALLERIES (CURRENTLY MUSEUM OF
CONTEMPORARY ART, ZAGREB)

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photography, transformed in the direction of encouraging individual and personal experience. In a sense, photography – same as language – presented itself as an alternative to the descriptive and picturesque nature of painting;⁵ and from the 1960s onwards, it became a medium to “enter” the broad field of meaning in contemporary art in a different way. Contrary to the earlier, modernist practice, where photography communicated things that were essential for its aesthetic evaluation, this period saw the birth of “constructions” and “enactments” of events taking their meaning to the very edge of limitations of the photographic medium as defined by modernism. That sort of “erosion” of the representational character of photography was a result of dematerializing the artistic object and shifting the focus from accomplishment as such to the process of reflection that preceded it. The *extended field* of the medium gradually allowed the entry of personal strategies within one’s artistic activity, based on ideas, as well as artworks that questioned the performative capacity of photography. In their production, the camera proved to be a tool that one could easily use to document an event or put an idea into practice. The frame ceased to demarcate the space of entry into layers that were considered “deeper” and therefore often related to the reality itself or to the artistic expression, as indicated by Victor Burgin. The visual narrative of many artworks to which this issue of *Život*

umjetnosti is dedicated is rather limited. In most cases, they are still about the visible world, but its meaning is evasive, defying all subjection to commonplace explanations. There is a new gap between what we see and what we know. The reason is that photography almost inevitably leads the spectator to use it as a sort of visual evidence. However, from the 1960s onwards this purpose often remained unfulfilled. French sociologists of the period were even of the opinion that one could no longer speak of photography by relying on aesthetical categories. According to them, it was a medium primarily intended for the ordinary user, serving as his or her window into the world, a *proof* of the existence of a material reality and his or her own being in this world. Important changes ensued only in the 1970s, especially owing to conceptual art, which liberated photography and made it possible to accept it as equivalent to other artistic media. Conceptual artists “appropriated” photography as a medium that they not only used to document their various actions and events, but also to focus on the creation and communication of ideas and/or concepts. Two exhibitions which took place in the 1960s introduced the conceptual art, and with it a new way of using photography, to the artistic map of Europe: *Op Losse Schroeven – situaties en cryptostructuren* and *When Attitudes Become Form*. *Arte povera*, anti-form, conceptual art, and *land art* challenged not

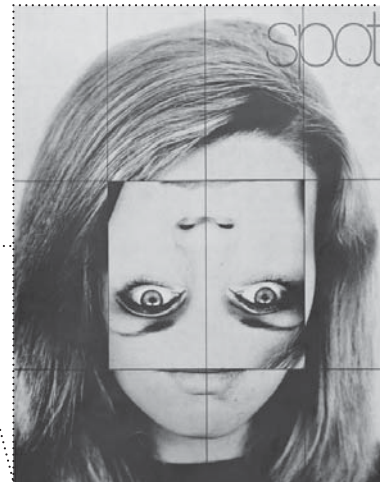
na onom što je netko vidio, nego osobit način aktiviranja drugih i drugačijih aspekata *ostataka* njezine estetske vrijednosti. Upravo zahvaljujući spomenutim izložbama suvremenu praksu ne reprezentira „stvaranje predmeta“, nego oslobađanje od njih. Interes autora usmjerava se prema značenjima koja se nalaze iza predmeta, dok sama materijalizacija nije u prvom planu. Autorsku strategiju reprezentira uputa o tome kako napraviti rad i informacija od čega se on sastoji i što se s njim događalo za vrijeme i nakon izvedbe. To se osobito tiče *land arta* i raznih performativnih događanja koja je bilo moguće prikazati pomoću fotografije, ponekad u kombinaciji s tekстом.⁶

U pokušaju što cjelovitijeg određivanja karaktera istraživanja koje joj je prethodilo, izložba *Nulta točka značenja* dobila je složen podnaslov – *Nefunkcionalna, neprikazivačka, elementarna, eksperimentalna i konceptualna fotografija u Hrvatskoj*. Njime se pokušalo odrediti polje djelovanja fotografije kao eksperimentalnog i istraživačkog medija usmjerenog propitivanju same prirode umjetnosti. Autori koji su u određenom trenutku

svog umjetničkog djelovanja odlučili posegnuti za fotoaparatom (ili su objašnjavali drugima što bi trebalo snimiti, ili pak jednostavno preuzimali – *usvajali* – tuđe fotografije) ne zanimaju se za tehničke mogućnosti medija ili samu kvalitetu snimka, već fotografiju smatraju vrstom *koordinate* koja funkcionira poput odjeka nekog događaja ili odsutnog umjetničkog rada, poput *kanala*⁷ kojim se posreduje konceptualizacija i realizacija određene zamisli.

U nacionalnom kontekstu važno je istaknuti utjecaje izložbenog projekta *Nova fotografija* koji je iniciralo uredništvo časopisa SPOT (1972.–1978.) kao prikaza fotografskih zbivanja koja se istovremeno javljaju na istočno- i zapadnoeuropskoj sceni. Bio je to poticaj za razmišljanje što je uopće fotografija i gdje su joj granice, pokušaj određivanja novih dimenzija likovno angažiranog medija unutar kojeg su se prepoznali autentični izrazi i nastojanja autora da sudjeluju u rasprostranjenoj sintaksi suvremene fotografske misli. Časopis za fotografiju SPOT pojavljuje se u vrijeme značajnih promjena u umjetnosti, osobito

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only the spectators, but also the curators, who introduced new and innovative strategies of action. From that point onwards, self-presentation, processuality, personal manifestos, body art, happenings, experiments conducted in order to analytically explore the medium, detachment from the representational status of artwork, and the use of anonymous photographs taken over from the printed media or from other people's archives, became a part of many artistic strategies. Their "final result" would be, among other things, a photography whose task was no longer to retain the attention on what had been seen, but rather to activate, in a special way, other people and other aspects of the *remnants* of its aesthetic value. It is precisely owing to the abovementioned exhibitions that the contemporary practice is not represented by the "creation of objects," but rather by getting rid of them. The artists' interest is now directed towards the meanings behind the objects, while their materialization has been pushed into the background. Artistic strategy is represented by the instruction on how to

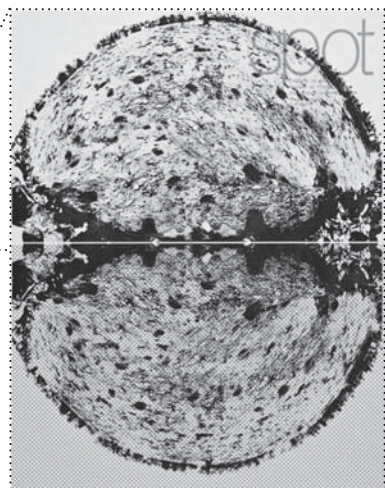
produce an artwork and the information on what it consists of, what happened with it during and after its performance. This especially refers to land art and various performative events that can be presented on photographs, occasionally combined with texts.⁶

In an effort to define the character of its underlying research, the exhibition *Zero Point of Meaning* was given a complex subtitle: *Non-functional, Non-representational, Elementary, Experimental and Conceptual Photography in Croatia*. Its aim was to determine the field of action for photography as an experimental and research-oriented medium, directed at exploring the very nature of art. Artists who at some point of their activity decided to reach for the camera (or instructed others to shoot something particular, or simply took over – *appropriated* – other people's photographs) were not interested in the technical possibilities of the medium or the quality of the shot as such. Instead, they considered the photograph as a sort of *coordinate* that functioned like an echo of some event or an absent artwork, like

načina njezina djelovanja, širenja područja interesa i oblika manifestiranja i posredovanja umjetničkih sadržaja, a na što su utjecale političke i društvene okolnosti kasnih 60-ih godina. U to doba upravo se fotografija često upotrebljava kao sredstvo artikulacije *etičkog stava* – jednog od središnjih principa djelovanja umjetnika šezdesetih i sedamdesetih godina. Poticaj za izlaženje jedinog časopisa namijenjenog fotografiji u drugoj polovici 20. stoljeća u Hrvatskoj iskazan je potrebom razvitka opće i posebne kulture vizualnih komunikacija, pri čemu je fotografija protumačena kao osobit način izražavanja, dokumentiranja i priopćavanja pomoću slike. Fotografija kao medij koji pripomaže u određivanju opće kulturne sredine i kojim se autori koriste vizualno oblikujući svoje istraživačke misli – a pritom mislim na fotografe kao i na umjetnike koji upotrebljavaju medij fotografije, u časopisu je predstavljena odabirom aktualnih, naprednih i eksperimentalnih radova. Način na koji su autorske fotografije komunicirale s čitateljstvom govori u prilog poticanja novih mogućnosti upotrebe i problematiziranja medija, kojim se

uz ostalo nastojalo kritički razmotriti sredinu i okolnosti opstanka progresivnog umjetničkog konteksta fotografije. Međunarodni odabir autora raznih generacija i načina umjetničkog izražavanja, rani interes za teorijsko razmatranje multimedijske umjetničke prakse, za eksperimente poput generativne fotografije,⁸ kseroksa⁹ i ostalih vidika i usmjerenja tzv. „nove fotografije“ rezultirali su promišljenim, beskompromisnim konceptom posredovanja suvremene fotografske misli. Kultura upotrebe tehnologije svojstvene mediju omogućila je da u časopisu budu objavljeni radovi koji su u to doba značajno pridonijeli širenju prostora unutar kojega se uobičajeno razmatrala fotografija, što osobito treba uzeti u obzir zbog činjenice da „staleške“ fotografske organizacije nisu bile spremne prihvatiti umjetničke eksperimente kakvima su bili skloni autori koji su se u svom radu koristili fotografijom.¹⁰

Nedugo nakon zasigurno poticajnih iskustava s *Novim tendencijama*, 1973. godine uredništvo inicira izložbeni projekt *Nova fotografija* koji je izazvao podijeljene reakcije.¹¹ Radilo se o



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a *channel*⁷ transmitting the conceptualization and realization of a particular idea.

In the Croatian context, it is important to emphasize the impact of the exhibition project of *New Photography*, initiated by the editorial board of the SPOT magazine (1972-1978), which presented the processes related to photography that occurred simultaneously on the Eastern European and Western European scene. It was an incentive for reflecting upon the very essence of photography and its limits, as well as an attempt at defining the new dimensions of this visually engaged medium, in which one sought to identify authentic expressions and efforts of artists to participate in the diffused syntax of contemporary photographic thought. Photography magazine SPOT appeared at the time when important changes were occurring in art, especially in terms of broadening its field of interest and its forms of manifestation and transmission of artistic subjects, influenced by the political and social circumstances in the late 1960s. At that time, it was precisely photography that was often used in order

to articulate an *ethical position* – which was one of the central principles of activity for artists in the 1960s and 1970s. Motives for the publication of the only Croatian magazine dedicated to photography in the second half of the 20th century resulted from the need of developing a general and a particular culture of visual communications, whereby photography was interpreted as a special way of expressing, documenting, and communicating things by means of images. As a medium that helped determine the general cultural setting, used by the artists to visually shape thoughts related to their research – whereby I mean photographers as well as artists who used the medium of photography – photography was represented in the magazine through a selection of current, progressive, and experimental artworks. The way in which art photographs communicated with the readership emphasized the need of encouraging new possibilities of using and discussing the medium, in which one sought, among other things, to take a critical stance towards the environment and the circumstances of survival of progressive

znakovitom i restriktivnom selektorskom odabiru, u što ćemo se uvjeriti ako ga usporedimo s preglednim skupnim izložbama koje su se održavale u to doba.¹² Ideja je bila prikazati nove dimenzije likovno angažirane fotografije, novu fotografsku vizualizaciju. Tragalo se za autentičnim izrazom, autorskim nastojanjima koja svjedoče o razgranatoj sintaksi neograničenih mogućnosti suvremene fotografske tehnike.

Autori izložbe bili su svjesni pozicije suvremene fotografije u tadašnjem jugoslavenskom kontekstu; istražili su sve ono što karakterizira pomak od konvencionalne, zanatske, tzv. salonske fotografije. Stane Bernik navodi kako u Jugoslaviji paralelno egzistiraju umjetnička i primijenjena fotografija.¹³ Umjetnička svoje nazore formira isključivo u odnosu prema primijenjenoj, a radi se mahom o djelima koja teže slikovitosti, koja žele preuzeti na sebe karakteristike slikarstva, što je u osnovi blisko tradicionalnom likovnom životu čiji smisao završava u izložbenoj dvorani. Druga je ovisna o tržištu koje unatoč svojim ograničenjima (među koja ubrajamo financijska kao i ograničenja dometa vizualnih komunikacija) egzistira i formira opći stav prema mediju pomoću plakata, reklama, njegovom upotrebom u televizijskim emisijama i pri oblikovanju raznih vizualnih poruka. Obje struje – i umjetničku i primijenjenu fotografiju – u najvećoj mjeri čine isti autori, što govori o amaterizmu, nedostatku formalnih iskustava, nespemnosti da se stvari pokrenu na bolje ili barem pokušaju biti

drugačije, a posljedice čega osjećamo još i danas.

Nepokretljivost se, piše Bernik, zadržala kao jedino spasonosno mjerilo 'ponašanja' unutar Bernike, gdje fotografija egzistira obilježena zatvorenim sustavima vrednovanja koji su sadržajno nedorađeni i formirani na nekritičkim temeljima. Stoga baštini mo fotografijsku scenu koja je rijetko bila predmetom kritičkog promišljanja; izložbe fotografije redovito su salonske, pregledne manifestacije, a fotografija najčešće nije bila predmetom kritičkih rasprava zajedno s ostalim umjetničkim medijima. Sve navedeno pridonijelo je nekritičkom odnosu prema fotografiji, koja je ostala gotovo u potpunosti lišena izoštranih i selektivnih projekata. Spomenimo da Ješa Denegri *kritizerima* izložbe dodatno objašnjava kako im namjera nije bila „pretenciozno uzdizanje fotografije na razinu 'umjetnosti' nego [se radilo] o jednostavnom pokušaju akcentiranja nekoliko individualnih primjera koji, svako na području vlastitih preokupacija, pridonose makar i djelomičnom proširenju repertoara njenih imanentnih izražajnih mogućnosti“.¹⁴ Osnovni kriterij nije bio ograničen na estetsku kategoriju, nego na eksperiment, istraživanje, pomicanje granica shvaćanja i mogućnosti izražavanja medija.

I Putar argumentira stavove i odabir *Nove fotografije*, želi odmak od staleške, „cehovske“ fotografije koja u to doba dominira i čija pravila i ograde nisu propuštale ništa od onoga što ih je zanimalo pokazati.

EXPERIMENTI,
ISTRAŽIVANJA I
POMICANJE
GRANICA
UMJETNOSTI
FOTOGRAFIJE
OD 60-ih GODINA
NADALJE

EXPERIMENTS,
RESEARCH, AND
SHIFTING THE
BORDERS OF
PHOTOGRAPHY
ART SINCE
THE 1960S

art photography. An international selection of authors belonging to different generations and forms of artistic expression, and the early interest for a theoretical reflection on the multimedia artistic practice and for experiments such as generative photography,⁸ Xerox,⁹ and other viewpoints and trends of the so-called “new photography”, resulted in a well reflected and uncompromising concept of mediating the contemporary photographic thought. The culture of using technology that was appropriate to the medium made it possible to publish artworks that were at that time importantly contributing to the broadening of space within which photography was generally considered, which must be especially taken into account in view of the fact that the “established” organizations of photographers were not willing to accept the artistic experiments that artists who were using photography in their work were prone to.¹⁰

In 1973, soon after the undoubtedly motivating experience with the *New Tendencies*, the editorial board launched an exhibition project called *New Photography*, which met with very different reactions.¹¹ It was the result of a significant and restrictive selection, which becomes evident when compared to group exhibitions of an overview type, which were prevailing during this period.¹² The idea was to show the new dimensions of the visually engaged photography, the new photographic visualization. What was sought was the authentic expression and artistic efforts that

testified of a ramified syntax and the unlimited possibilities of the contemporary photographic technique.

Artists who were present at the exhibition were well aware of the position of contemporary photography in the Yugoslav context of the time; they explored everything that meant a shift away from the conventional, professional, and so-called “salon photography”. Stane Bernik wrote that there were two types of photography existing in Yugoslavia at the same time: art photography and applied photography.¹³ Art photography formed its attitudes exclusively with respect to the applied one, and consisted mostly of artworks that sought to achieve the visual quality and features of painting, which was essentially close to the traditional visual existence, whose meaning ended with the exhibition hall. Applied photography depended on the market, which despite its limitations (both financial and those related to the scope of visual communications) existed and shaped the general attitude towards the medium by means of posters, advertisements, and its use in TV-programmes and in shaping various visual messages. It is interesting that both trends – art photography and applied photography – were mostly pursued by the same authors, which speaks of amateurism and the lack of formal experiences or readiness to change things for the better, or at least try to change them; and the consequences of that are still felt today.

Na tragu te ideje istraživanje i izložba *Nulta točka značenja* posvećeni su pojedinačnim odlukama autora o načinu upotrebe fotografije. One su složene i različite; ovise o osobitim lokalnim, društvenim pa i geografskim potrebama i interesima umjetnika, društva i umjetničkih zajednica/grupa. Svima njima zajedničko je stalno propitivanje medija, prirode njegove promjenjivosti kao i utjecaja na društvene odnose. Upravo stoga bilo je potrebno prisjetiti se strategija *nove fotografije*, tema posvećenih jeziku, tijelu, mjestima i područjima djelovanja, što su, uz ostalo, konstitutivni elementi konceptualne umjetnosti na raznim stranama svijeta.

Sedamdesetih godina tema statusa vremena javlja se širom Europe, kao i u mnogim istočnoeuropskim zemljama. Analitičke umjetničke akcije kao i istraživanje pozicije, značenja i odnosa tijela u prostoru neki su od razloga zbog kojih se pojavljuju fotografske sekvencije čija struktura do neke mjere podsjeća na onu jezika. Fotografija se ne razmatra više kao objektivni dokaz, nego i kao subjektivni iskaz; ona je registar ideja, arhiv neizravnih referencija procesâ koji karakteriziraju raznovrsne autorske postupke. Beznačajne i naizgled apsurdne informacije postaju dijelovi složenih umjetničkih izjava koji oduzimaju ili mijenjaju identitet stvarnosti. Poneki su atematski prikazi na tragu ideje o „nefunkcionalnoj fotografiji“¹⁵ – pri čemu prvenstveno mislim na njezino često isticano svojstvo pripovijedanja i prikazivanja.

Oslobođena podređenog položaja koji je dugo vremena imala u odnosu na „lijepe“ umjetnosti, „potpomognuta“ ostalim načinima reprezentacije (jezik, karte) koji ne potpadaju pod uobičajene estetske konvencije, fotografija postaje umjetničko sredstvo posredovanja *nestabilnog značenja* (V. Burgin). A ono je, poput svega što proizlazi iz ljudskih aktivnosti, složeno od raznovrsnih istraživanja i nesentimentalnih sadržaja koji su je, svaki na svoj način i u svoje vrijeme, formirali i utjecali na promjenu njezine pozicije i razumijevanja.

¹ Više o razlikama između poslijeratne europske i američke fotografske prakse vidjeti Stefan Gromet, „Alternative Pictures: Conceptual Art and the Artistic Emancipation of Photography in Europe“, u: Douglas Fogle (ur.), *The Last Picture Show: Artists Using Photography 1960 – 1982*, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, 2003., 86–87.

² Kao najopsežnije kritičko promišljanje Steichenova projekta poslužiti će knjiga s prilozima simpozija o humanizmu i postmodernizmu: Jean Back, Viktoria Schmidt-Linsenhoff (ur.), *The Family of Man 1955-2001. Humanismus und Postmoderne: Eine Revision von Edward Steichens Fotoausstellung / Humanism and Postmodernism: A Reappraisal of the Photo Exhibition by Edward Steichen*, Jonas Verlag, Marburg, 2004.

³ Naglasila bih interes prema estetici Nove objektivnosti, uz ostalo.

⁴ Po tumačenjima nekih kritičara poslijeratni modernizam u svojoj ranoj fazi zadržava pojedine karakteristike osobite izvedenice socijalističkog modernizma. Ješa Denegri, „Inside or Outside ‘Socialist Modernism’? Radical Views on the Yugoslav Art Scene, 1950–1970“, u: *Impossible Histories. Historical Avant-gardes, Neo-avant-gardes, and Post-avant-gardes in Yugoslavia, 1918–1991*, (ur.) Dubravka Djurić, Miško Šuvaković, MIT Press, Cambridge&London, 2003., 173.

⁵ Anne Rorimer, *New Art in the 60s and 70s. Redefining Reality*, Thames&Hudson, 2001., 115.

Inertia, as Bernik wrote, was cherished as the only safe mode of “behaviour” within the profession, where photography was marked by closed systems of evaluation, unperfected in terms of content and formed on uncritical foundations. Thus, we have inherited a photographic scene that was rarely a subject of critical reflection; photographic exhibitions were often salon-like events that served as overviews, and photography was mostly excluded from the critical discussions that affected other artistic media. All this contributed to an uncritical attitude towards photography, which was completely void of all pointed or selective projects. It should also be noted that Ješa Denegri additionally explained to the *critics* of the exhibition that its intention was not to “pretentiously raise photography to the level of ‘art’; it was a simple attempt at singling out several individual examples that have contributed, each in its own field of interest, to at least partly extend the repertoire of its immanent possibilities of expression.”¹⁴ The basic criterion was not limited to the aesthetical category, but included experimentation, exploration, and shifting the limits of understanding the medium and its possibilities of expression. Putar also commented upon the attitude and the selection of *New Photography*, claiming that it was trying to detach itself from the established, “professional” photography that was prevailing at the time, photography whose rules and fences let nothing through that these photographers wanted to show. Following

that idea, the research on and the exhibition of the *Zero Point of Meaning* were dedicated to the individual choices of various artists as to the way of using photography. These choices were complex and varied; they depended on the specific local, social, and even geographic needs and interests of the particular artists, the society, or artistic communities/groups. What they had in common was that they were constantly exploring the medium, the nature of its mutability, and its impact on social relations. It is precisely for that reason that we must recall the strategies of *new photography*, its topics dedicated to language and the body, its site and its field of activity, which have been, among other things, the constitutive elements of conceptual art in various parts of the world. In the 1970s, the status of time emerged as a topic throughout Europe, including many Eastern European countries. Analytical artistic actions, as well as explorations of the position, the meaning, and the relations of the body in space were among the reasons for the appearance of photographic sequences whose structure was somewhat reminiscent of that of language. Photography was no longer considered only as an objective reflection, but also as a subjective expression; it was a registry of ideas, an archive of indirect references to processes that characterized various artistic procedures. Meaningless and apparently absurd pieces of information became parts of complex artistic statements that subtracted or changed the identity of the

⁶ Navedene programatske naputke definirao je Harald Szeemann, kustos kultne izložbe *When Attitudes Become Form*. Vidi: Stefan Gronert, isto, 87.

⁷ Termin *Maxa Bensea* citirani u: Lawrence Alloway, „Artists and Photographs (1970)”, u: Douglas Fogle (ur.), *The Last Picture Show: Artists Using Photography 1960–1982*, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, 2003., 20.

⁸ Herbert W. Franke, „Generativna fotografija”, *SPOT*, 2 (1973.), 12–15.

⁹ Želimir Košćević, „Xerox – mogućnosti ili zabluda”, *SPOT*, 5 (1974.), 11–22.

¹⁰ Radoslav Putar, „Staleška revija”, *SPOT*, 3 (1973.), 28.

¹¹ Stane Bernik, Ješa Denegri, Radoslav Putar, „Razlozi za jednu inicijativu – NF1”, *SPOT*, 3 (1973.), 21–27.

¹² Na prvoj izložbi sudjelovali su: Petar Dabac, Ivan Dvoršak, Ahmet Ad-Imamović, Stane Jagodić, Zmago Jeraj, Željko Jerman, Mirko Lovrić, Enes Midžić i Tomislav Peternek; što znači da je velika većina koja je ostala izvan izbora jedino bila u prilici „odbaciti izložbu kao nesporazum”, uz obveznu napomenu da bi i oni znali takvo što napraviti. Posjetioci su ipak prihvatili izazov – vjerojatno kao provokaciju, kao poticaj za razmišljanje što je uopće fotografija i gdje su joj granice.

¹³ Stane Bernik, isto, 21.

¹⁴ Ješa Denegri, isto, 22.

¹⁵ Annie Le Brun, „The Feeling of Nature at the Close of the Twentieth Century”, u: *Camera Austria*, 14 (1984.), 19–24. Autorica je tezu o nefunkcionalnoj fotografiji razmatrala na temelju ciklusa radova Petra Dabca. Njezin termin doživljavam primarno kao labavi okvir promišljanja o fotografijama čije je pripovjedno svojstvo gotovo potpuno zanemareno i čija je tradicionalna „funkcionalnost” zamijenjena nekim novim, ili bolje rečeno drukčijim karakterom – možemo ga nazvati nereprezentacijskim, neadekvatnim, i slično.

reality. Some non-thematic examples followed the idea of “non-functional photography”¹⁵ – whereby I primarily mean its often emphasized feature of narration and presentation. Liberated from its subjected position with respect to the “fine” arts, which it had occupied for such a long time, and “supported” by other modes of representation (language, maps), which were not subject to common aesthetic conventions, photography became an artistic way of communicating the *instability of meaning* (V. Burgin). And that was, like anything else that results from human activities, composed of various research and unsentimental subjects that have, each in its own way and time, shaped and modified its position and understanding.

¹ For more on the differences between the post-war photographic practice in Europe and the US, see: Stefan Gronert, “Alternative Pictures: Conceptual Art and the Artistic Emancipation of Photography in Europe,” in: *The Last Picture Show: Artists Using Photography 1960 – 1982*, ed. by Douglas Fogle (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 2003), 86–87.

² The most exhaustive critical reflection of Steichen’s project can be found in the volume of proceedings from a symposium on humanism and postmodernism: *The Family of Man 1955–2001. Humanismus und Postmoderne: Eine Revision von Edward Steichens Fotoausstellung / Humanism and Postmodernism: A Reappraisal of the Photo Exhibition by Edward Steichen*, ed. by Jean Back and Viktoria Schmidt-Linsenhoff (Marburg: Jonas Verlag, 2004).

³ I would like to emphasize, among other things, the interest that New Objectivity showed for aesthetics.

⁴ According to some art critics, post-war modernism retained in its early phase some of the characteristics of its specific branch of socialist modernism. Cf. Ješa

Denegri, “Inside or Outside ‘Socialist Modernism’? Radical Views on the Yugoslav Art Scene, 1950–1970,” in: *Impossible Histories. Historical Avant-gardes, Neo-avant-gardes, and Post-avant-gardes in Yugoslavia, 1918–1991*, ed. by Dubravka Djurić and Miško Šuvaković (Cambridge & London: MIT Press, 2003), 173.

⁵ Anne Rorimer, *New Art in the 60s and 70s. Redefining Reality* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2001), 115.

⁶ These programmatic guidelines were defined by Harald Szeemann, curator of the famous exhibition *When Attitudes Become Form*. In: Stefan Gronert (as in n. 1), 87.

⁷ Terms by Max Bense, quoted in: Lawrence Alloway, “Artists and Photographs (1970),” in: *The Last Picture Show: Artists Using Photography 1960–1982*, ed. by Douglas Fogle (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 2003), 20.

⁸ Herbert W. Franke, “Generativna fotografija” [Generative photography], *SPOT* 2 (1973), 12–15.

⁹ Želimir Košćević, “Xerox – mogućnosti ili zabluda” [Xerox – Possibilities or illusion], *SPOT* 5 (1974), 11–22.

¹⁰ Radoslav Putar, “Staleška revija” [Show of the profession], *SPOT* 3 (1973), 28.

¹¹ Stane Bernik, Ješa Denegri, and Radoslav Putar, “Razlozi za jednu inicijativu – NF1” [Reasons for an initiative], *SPOT* 3 (1973), 21–27.

¹² The first exhibition included photographs by Petar Dabac, Ivan Dvoršak, Ahmet Ad-Imamović, Stane Jagodić, Zmago Jeraj, Željko Jerman, Mirko Lovrić, Enes Midžić, and Tomislav Peternek, which means that the large majority that was excluded could only “reject the exhibition as a misunderstanding,” with an obligatory remark that they could have also produced something like that. The visitors accepted the challenge – possibly as a provocation and food for thought considering the essence of photography and its limitations.

¹³ Stane Bernik (as in n. 11), 21.

¹⁴ Ješa Denegri (as in n. 11), 22.

¹⁵ Annie Le Brun, “The Feeling of Nature at the Close of the Twentieth Century,” *Camera Austria* 14 (1984), 19–24. Le Brun considered the hypothesis of non-functional photography on the basis of a series of photographs by Petar Dabac. I take her term primarily as a loose framework for reflecting on photographs whose narrative feature has been neglected almost entirely, while their traditional “functionality” has been substituted through a new, or rather different character – which we could call non-representational, inadequate, and alike.